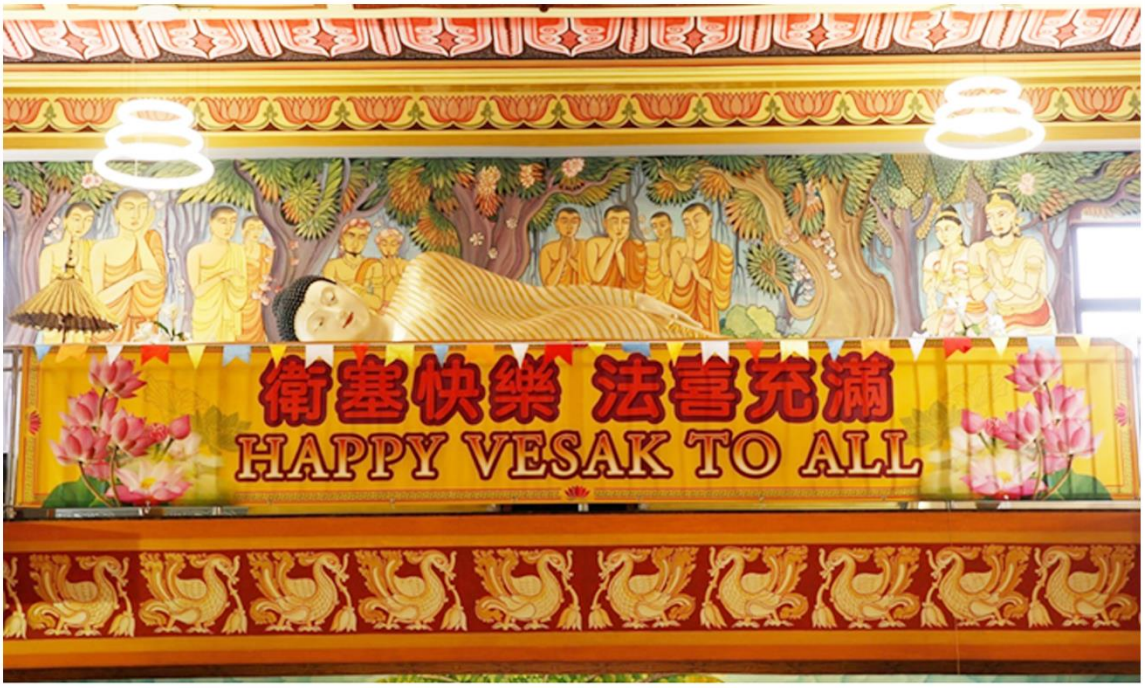
Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin

Apr - Jun 2023



Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim

In this issue, we bring you snapshots of the morning and evening Vesak Day celebrations at Mangala Vihara (MV), and the Memorial Service in memory of Bhante M M Mahaweera Mahanayaka Mahāthera, Founder of MV and BPCS and Bhante P Gnanarama Anunayaka Mahāthera, Founding Principal of BPCS.

We are grateful to Bhante Suneetha for the timely sharing about the *Maraṇasati* Funeral Ritual, introduced by the late Bhante Mahaweera. Read on to find out how it generates beneficial outcomes for oneself and others!

We are also joyous to share the programme for BPCS' 30th Anniversary Symposium, *Sammodanā*, scheduled on 9 September 2023. Join us as we rejoice with BPCS for turning the Dhamma wheel for the past 30 years!

Thank you once again for staying in tune with us. If you have any feedback or articles which you would like to contribute, please feel free to drop Sister Tyy Yn an email at tyyynquek@gmail.com.

May all be well, happy and peaceful!

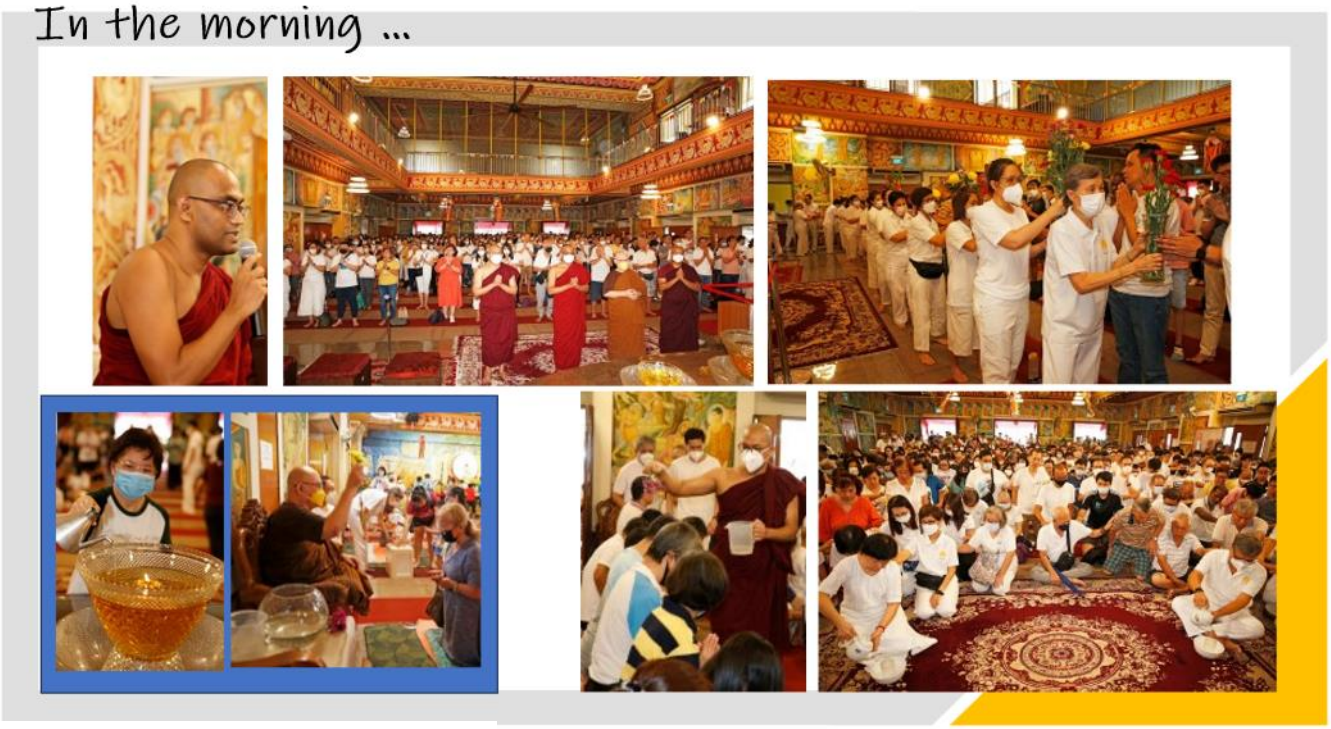
The Editorial Team

Vesek Day @ Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)

HAPPY VESAK!
Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
VESAK PROGRAM
VESAK EVE: 1 JUN 2023
• 6.45 pm: Bodhi Puja
• 7.00 pm: Buddha Puja & Mahasamaya Sutta Chanting
VESAK DAY: 2 JUN 2023
• 9.00 am: Opening of the Buddha's & the Arahant Sivali's Relic Caskets
• 10.45 am: Buddha Puja
• 11.15 am: Offering of Dana to the monks
• 11.30 am: Distribution of Holy Water & Five-coloured threads
• 6.45 pm: Bodhi Puja
• 7.00 pm: Buddha Puja
• 8.00 pm: Candle Light Procession
MANGALA VIHARA (BUDDHIST TEMPLE), 30 JLN EUNOS, 419495

Arahant Sivali's relic Buddha's relic

Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim



Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim

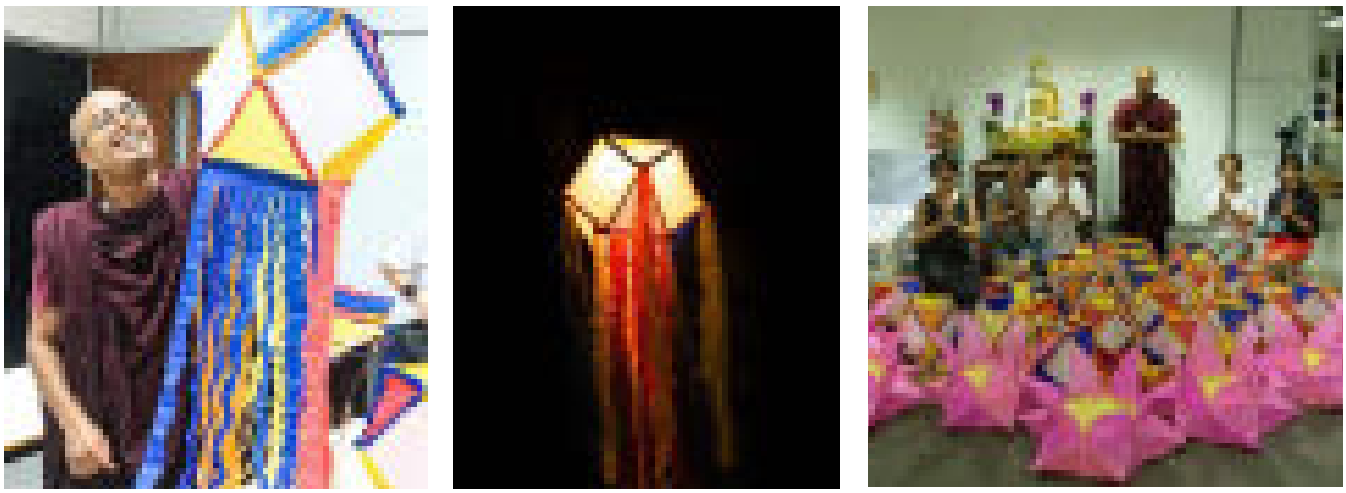
The Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore Alumni Booth
Promoting Buddhist Tertiary Education in Singapore
SIHA THE WISE

Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim and Sister Quek Tyy Yn

Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim

In the evening ...

Photos credit: Brother Patrick Lim



Vesek Lanterns

Photos credit: MV(FB)

Memorial Day

10 June 2023

Late Bhante M M Mahaweera Mahanayaka Mahāthera

Late Bhante P Gnanarama Anunayaka Mahāthera

Founder of Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
Founder of Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore

Founding Principal
Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore

Dhamma Talk by
Ven Dr R. Gnanasiha Mahāthera
Samadhi Buddhist Society

- Puja Service
- Dhamma Talk
- Sāṅghika Dāna

The *Maraṇasati* Funeral Ritual

By Rev Mahiyanganaye Suneetha Thero, Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) and Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore

"Mindfulness of death, when developed and cultivated,
is of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the deathless,
having the deathless as its consummation."
The Buddha

Introduction

The *Maraṇasati* funeral ritual offers the night chanting service from the first day of someone's passing away until the final day of the funeral. The term, '*maraṇasati*' means mindfulness (*sati*) of death (*maraṇa*). Traditionally, *maraṇasati* is a form of Buddhist meditation, which takes 'death' as the object of meditation. This funeral ritual is given the name, maraṇasati, since it takes death as the object of the ritual performance and it aims to bring a meditative experience to the participants with regard to death. The *Maraṇasati* is a newly introduced ritual in Singapore to fulfil the ritualistic needs in Chinese traditional funerals according to the *Theravāda* school of Buddhism. It was introduced by Venerable Mahaweera in the 1950s. This ritual is not to be seen as a mere ritualistic act but a meritorious act, an action that generates beneficial outcomes for oneself and others. It is an act of generosity in which one devotes time and effort to cultivate and dedicate merits with the compassionate intent of generating a healthy next life for the deceased. It is also an act of meditation in which one reflects on the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of our existence.

Performance of the Ritual

The ritual is held for three to five days from someone's passing away until the final day of the funeral. Commonly, it takes place at night at the sight of the casket with the participation of monastic members, family members and other spiritual friends.

Preparation

Everyone stands or sits around the coffin: the monastic members usually sit in front of the coffin; relatives of the departed sit on the right side; lay members, who are not related, sit on the left side; and the chanting leader, the layperson who takes the leading role in the recitation, sits close to the monastic members on the left side. All the participants are given the *Maraṇasati* texts to engage in the *Maraṇasati* recitation.

The *Maraṇasati* Recitation

The *Maraṇasati* recitation receives the central focus of the ritual. It is not a mere verbal act of recitation but a meditative reflection. The main recitations of the ritual are:

- **The recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*)** – It reflects on the virtues of the Buddha.
- **The recollection of loving-kindness (*mettānussati*)** – It reflects on sharing of loving-kindness with oneself and all beings, wishing happiness and blissfulness for all.
- **The recollection of loathsomeness (*asubhānussati*)** – It reflects on the impure nature of our body.
- **The recollection of death (*maraṇānussati*)** – It reflects on the dying nature of our psycho-physical faculties.
- **The eight sorrowful stages of life (*aṭṭha mahāsaṃvega vatthu*)** – They are birth, ageing, sickness, death, purgatory, the circle of suffering in the past and the future and suffering in the search for food.

Offering of White Cloth (or Robe)

The offering of white cloth occurs only on the final day of the *Maraṇasati* ritual after the recitation. First, having knelt on the floor, one member of the departed one's family holds the white cloth. Then, a monastic member leads everyone to recite the *Pāli* stanza for offering the white cloth to the monastic community in the name of the departed one. Then, he/she hands the white cloth to the senior monastic member.

Short Dhamma Talk

A short Dhamma talk is offered by a monastic member on the final day of the ritual.

Dedication of Merits

Dedication of merits is the final step of the ritual. Here, a family member of the departed one holds a teapot, which is filled with water, while others touch his/her shoulder from the back. Then, he/she slowly pours water into the empty teacup placed in a bowl until it overflows, while reciting:

> *idaṃ me ñātīnaṃ hotu, sukhitā hontu ñātayo*.
> [Let this merit accrue to our relatives and may they be happy.]

The pouring of water into an empty cup symbolises the transference of merits and the rejoicing of merits. The teapot filled with water represents the merits that have been accumulated by the living. The empty cup represents the departed one who is in need of meritorious support. The touching of everyone's shoulder indicates everyone's participation and the unification of their merits. The pouring represents the process of transferring merits from the living to the deceased. The overflowing of the cup symbolises the rejoicing of merits by the deceased.

Participation in the Ritual

The participation of spiritual friends or members of Buddhist communities is an important part of performing the *Maraṇasati* ritual. It is mainly to pay their last respect to the deceased by dedicating merits and offering emotional support to the grieving family. Besides, the participants take the *Maraṇasati* ritual as a part of their spiritual cultivation, which rewards them greatly. It helps to generate the mental strength not to be over-shaken by the unpleasant aspects of life, such as death, ageing, illness and separation from loved ones. It also helps to develop healthy attitudes by adding more appreciation to life and the things around us, enabling us to find the values in spirituality and awaken our altruistic mindset.

Reflection

In remembering our departed ones, we realise that DEATH is inevitable. It will come to all. This life comes to an end like a streak of lightning. Death comes even to the Buddhas endowed with great glory, prowess, merits and wisdom. What could be said of me?

In realising that DEATH is inevitable, let us not fear death but be confident to accept its nature.

In realising that DEATH is inevitable, let us spend our precious time as if it were our last.

In realising that DEATH is inevitable, let us cultivate generosity, compassion and wisdom instead of greed, hatred and ignorance.

May All Beings Be Well & Happy!

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

Taking a Natural Course of Life

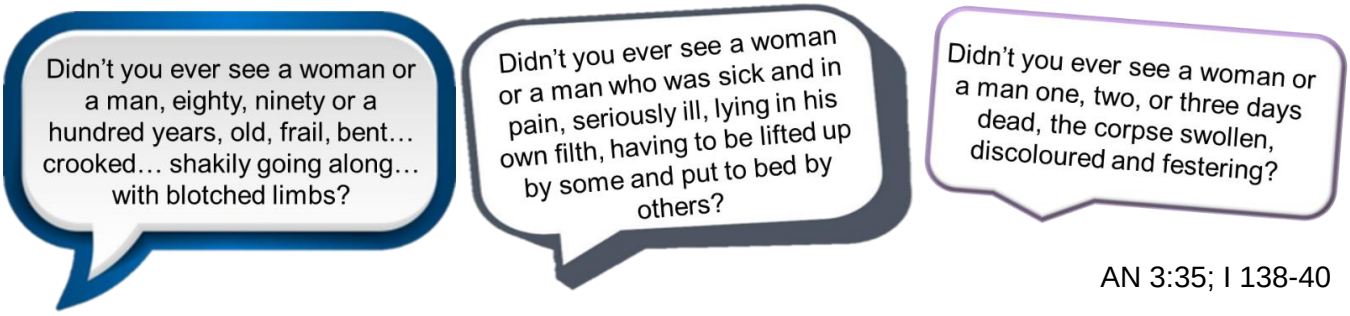
By Sister Amāyā Quek

Doc: "The blood test result for your dad isn't very good. His kidney functions have deteriorated to a non-ideal level".
Me: "What's the implication?"
Doc: "It will continue to deteriorate, making him increasingly tired, sometimes drowsy and weak."
Me: "How many more years does he have?"
Doc: "Probably a year."

The above conversation took place about a year ago. Recently, we had the following dialogue at a family conference with my dad's attending doctors:

Doc: "Your dad's liver is functioning at less than 5%. The consistently high creatinine level and no signs of infection / internal bleeding, indicate that he is at the end stage of kidney failure. Would you like to transfer him to inpatient hospice care?"
Bro: "We will bring him home as he wants to go home."
Me: "How much longer does he have?"
Doc: "It will be a few weeks to a low number of months, depending on the individual and if there is any further complication."

On both occasions, I was mindful of the three divine messengers:

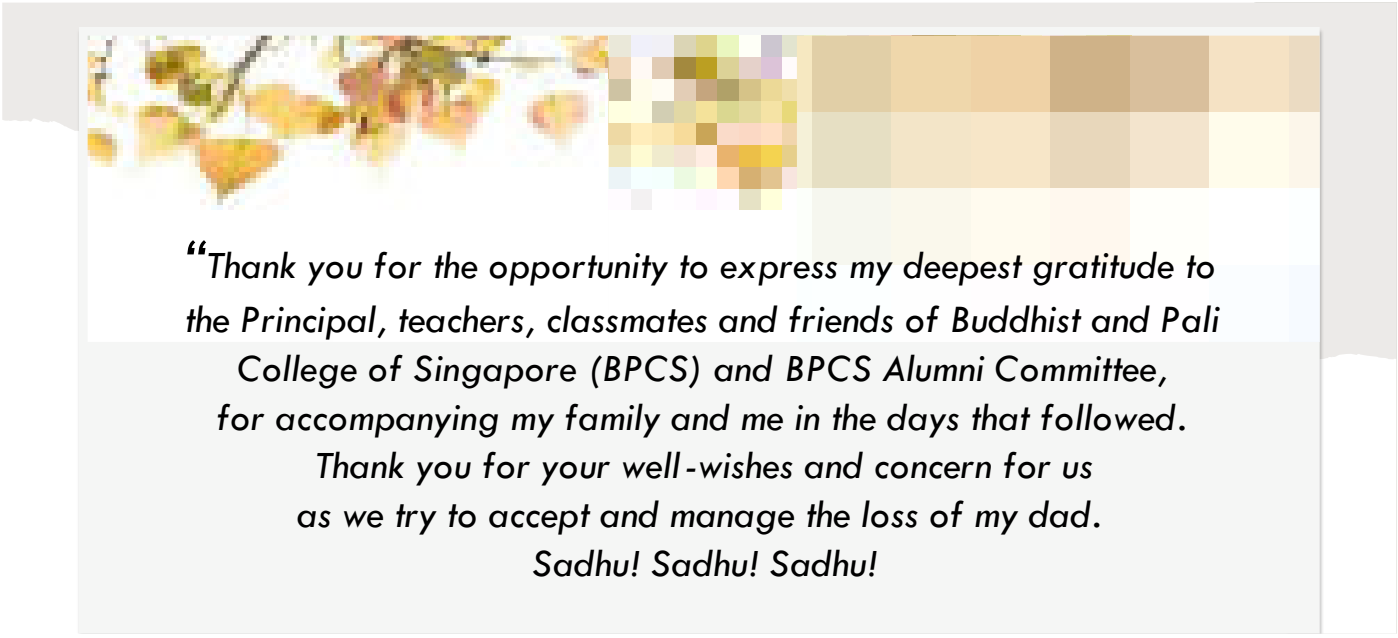

Didn't you ever see a woman or a man, eighty, ninety or a hundred years, old, frail, bent… crooked… shakily going along… with blotched limbs?
Didn't you ever see a woman or a man who was sick and in pain, seriously ill, lying in his own filth, having to be lifted up by some and put to bed by others?
Didn't you ever see a woman or a man one, two, or three days dead, the corpse swollen, discoloured and festering?

AN 3:35; I 138-40

I was glad that despite different religious beliefs, my family members were agreeable to let nature (or rather death) takes its course. We adopted the doctors' advice against putting him on dialysis given his frailty and no

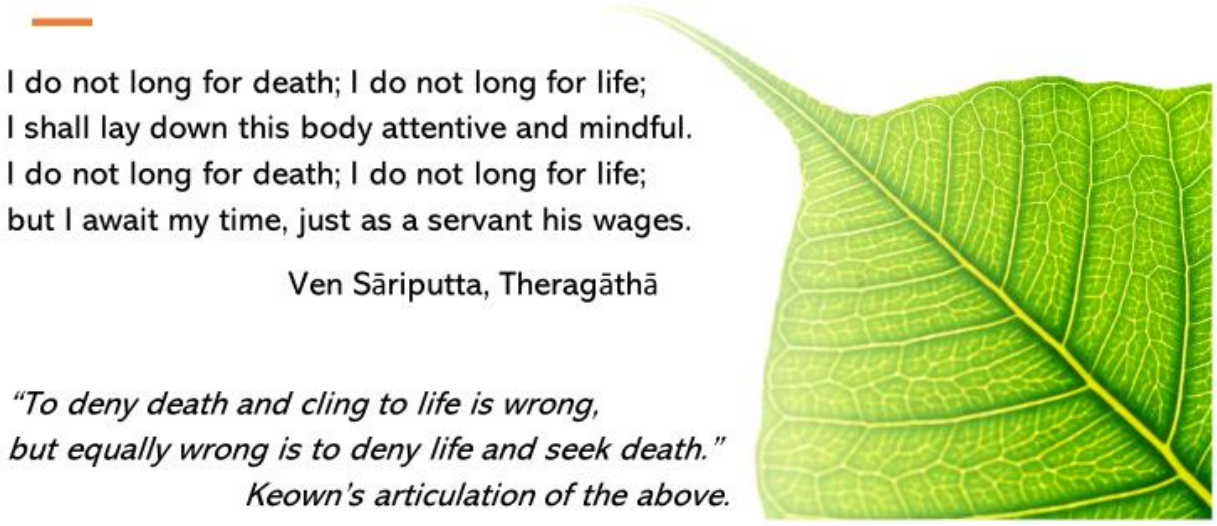
chance of weaning off dialysis. Instead, we were gratified to have the opportunity to walk with him in his last phase of life, making him as comfortable as possible and helping him prepare for it as much as possible, though it was difficult to ascertain his wishes due to his moderate dementia. Personally, I was blessed to be able to continue my studies with BPC, when it would be next year if we were to go by the norm. During the weeks when my dad was not feeling too well, we were discussing suicide, euthanasia, a variety of life sustaining treatments and natural death in the subject of *Buddhist Social Philosophy and Modern World*. The discussions gave me several fresh perspectives on seeing the second divine messenger of sickness. It also facilitated the conversation on the care plan for my dad at the family conference with the doctors e.g., use of feeding tube and pain relief methods.

Nevertheless, when his last days seemed near, I was a little ruffled, and worried about his last thought moments. With a family of different religious beliefs, it would be sensitive to invite Bhantes to chant for him at home. Thanks to Sis Lynn's advice, I chanted for him instead, using the BPCA's *Metta Outreach Group Chanting Booklet* put together by Bro Bryan. Thankfully, I did it in time, as the next time I saw him, a few hours later, he had passed on, peacefully.


"Thank you for the opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Principal, teachers, classmates and friends of Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore (BPCS) and BPCS Alumni Committee, for accompanying my family and me in the days that followed. Thank you for your well-wishes and concern for us as we try to accept and manage the loss of my dad. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

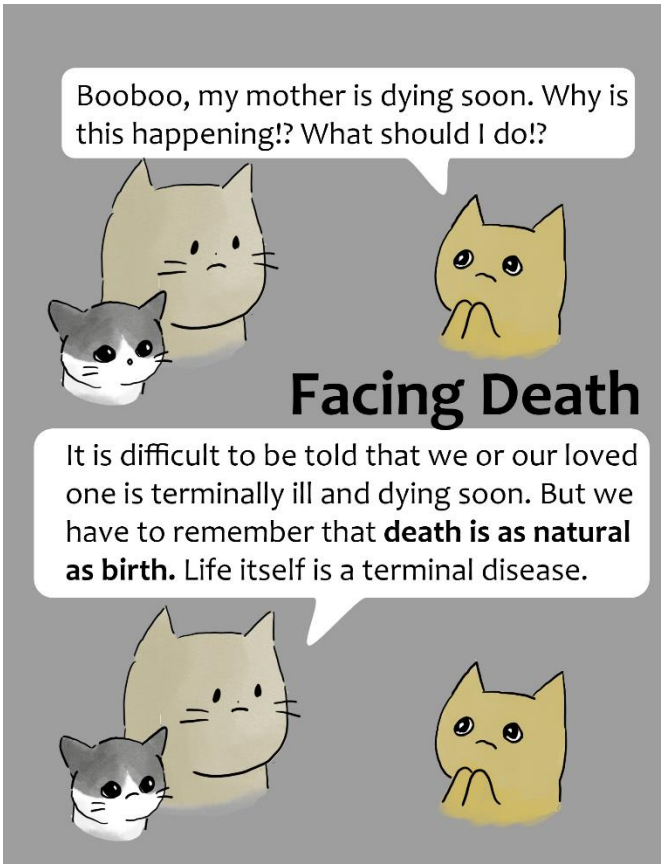
The most significant gain from the episode was the realisation that with an appreciative heart, everything that happened seemed to be the best that could have happened given the situation:

- While the “few weeks / low number of months” that the doctors mentioned was in fact just 11 days, we realised that my dad chose the perfect timing when all of us were around, as we had individual overseas trips planned over the next few weeks; and the seventh days were on Sundays where his children / grandchildren would be relatively available for the follow-up rituals;
- While he was drowsy most of the time after the compassionate discharge home, he was alert to make his last wishes known;
- And for me, my unsettling mind was calmed with a relatively detailed discussion on life sustaining treatments in my classes during those days, and realising the application of the Buddha’s teaching - which is not on avoiding death but stopping rebirth. By focusing on stopping rebirth, we will not unduly pursue medical interventions merely for the sake of prolonging life which brings about more physical and mental suffering here and thereafter, for ourselves and our dear ones; at the same time, we should also not give up our life to “avoid suffering”, for a human birth is precious. We should optimise this rare opportunity to develop ourselves spiritually to benefit ourselves and others.
- On a lighter note, two other unusual things happened. Just before my dad passed on, my company upgraded the security requirements, and I could not access company emails on my mobile phone during the funeral week. This lightened my mind that week; when I got a newer phone, I forgot to backup my whatsapp chats and all messages during that week were not recovered. Guess this is a sign to let go…


I do not long for death; I do not long for life;
I shall lay down this body attentive and mindful.
I do not long for death; I do not long for life;
but I await my time, just as a servant his wages.
Ven Sāriputta, Theragāthā
“To deny death and cling to life is wrong,
but equally wrong is to deny life and seek death.”
Keown’s articulation of the above.

Facing Death

By Siha and Friends


Booboo, my mother is dying soon. Why is this happening!? What should I do!?
Facing Death
It is difficult to be told that we or our loved one is terminally ill and dying soon. But we have to remember that **death is as natural as birth.** Life itself is a terminal disease.

From this Five Stages of Grief we must understand the importance of showing **emotional support and care** for anyone facing death or loss.

Denial
Anger
Depression
Bargaining
Acceptance

With acceptance, comes meaning.
A meaning to how we should spend our time and lead our life.

Preparation
Seeing our loved one dying is difficult. Thus always try to remain calm.
Maintain a peaceful and calm ambience at home for the patient. Prepare a will.
Be prepared for the costs of funeral and burial or cremation.

Give love
Give our dying loved one lots of love. Show our loved ones through words and touch.

Moment of death
At the moment of death, the mind may be at the clearest. The sense of hearing is the last to fade away. They may still be able to hear us, thus words of kindness, gratitude, assurance and forgiveness are important. **To assured them all will be well** and grant them the permission to leave this world. Let him or her be free.

After death
Where will one go after death? The present life will take care of the after life. Their spiritual qualities and deeds will bring them to where they are inclined to be.

Remember,
I am of the nature to age, to fall ill, to die. I cannot avoid them.

All that is mine, dear and appealing to me will change and vanish.

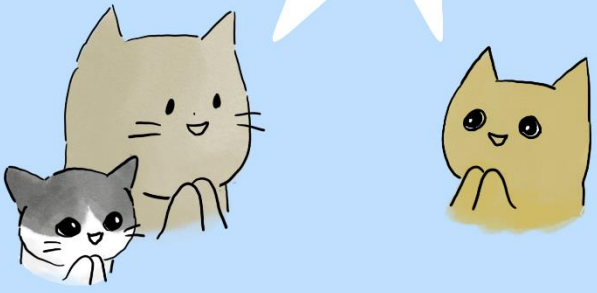
I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, supported by my actions. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I inherit.

Thus never waste our life away and never live our life in fear and denial.

"A man long absent comes home safe from afar. His family, friends, and companions, welcome his return.

In just the same way, when you've done good and gone from this world to the world beyond, your good deeds receive you —
just as kin, someone dear had returned home."

Now let us share our merits to anyone who is suffering and in pain! May all beings be well and happy!



Upcoming Courses

Introduction to

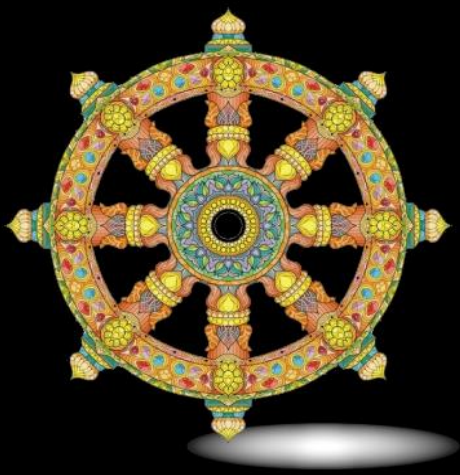
Buddhism Course

July 2023 (25th Intake)

* How much do you know about Buddhism?
* Are you a knowledgeable Buddhist?
* What is the essence of Buddhism?
* Do you know how to practise Buddhism?

Course Details:

Course Date	: 12th July to 20th Sept 2023 (10 weeks)
Frequency	: Every Wednesday 7.30pm to 9.30pm
Venue	: Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple 30 Jalan Eunos, S'pore 419495 (Opposite Eunos MRT)
Course Fees	: By donation
Email	: Intro2buddhismbpca@gmail.com
Tel	: Sis. Lynn @ 8288 9888
Instructors	: By experienced Dhamma Teachers



Topics are covered in plain and simple language and include:

The Freedom of Inquiry in Buddhism, the Life of the Buddha, the 3 Characteristics of Existence, the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8 Fold Path, Rebirth and Kamma, the Buddhist Texts, How to Practise Buddhism, the Different Buddhist Traditions, the Meaning of Common Buddhist Rituals and Chanting, Buddhist Meditation.

Organized by the Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore

Not authorised for hard copy print and distribution

Upcoming Courses

Certificate Course in Buddhist Counselling

11 to 20 August 2023

Organised by
Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore Alumni Committee

About the Course

It aims to provide elementary knowledge of counselling principles of Buddhist psychology and to show their applicability and practicability in resolving psychological problems in daily life.

Special attention is paid to the therapeutic values of Insight and Tranquillity meditation.

Modes of delivery: Lectures, role play and actual case studies

About the Trainer

Professor Wasantha Priyadharsana
Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
Visiting Professor, Buddhadharma Centre of Hong Kong

Course Content

1. Nature of Buddhist Counselling Psychology
2. Theories of Buddhist Counselling
3. Buddhist Analysis of Psychopathology, Mental Disorders and Abnormal Behaviours
4. Counselling Skills and Code of Ethics
5. Buddhist Counselling Approaches and Techniques
6. Relevance of Buddhist Counselling for Resolving Psychological Problems

**70% attendance is required to be awarded the Certificate in Buddhist Counselling*

Dates and Venue

11 to 20 August 2023 (30 hours over 10 days)
Monday to Friday: 7.30pm to 9.30pm
Saturday: 9am to 12noon, 2pm to 5pm
Sunday: 2pm to 5pm

Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)
30 Jalan Eunos Singapore 419495

Fees

Registration fee: $50 non-refundable
Course fee: Free
Donation to defray costs is welcome.

Limited to 100 pax; priority will be given to BPCA alumni and MV-related group members

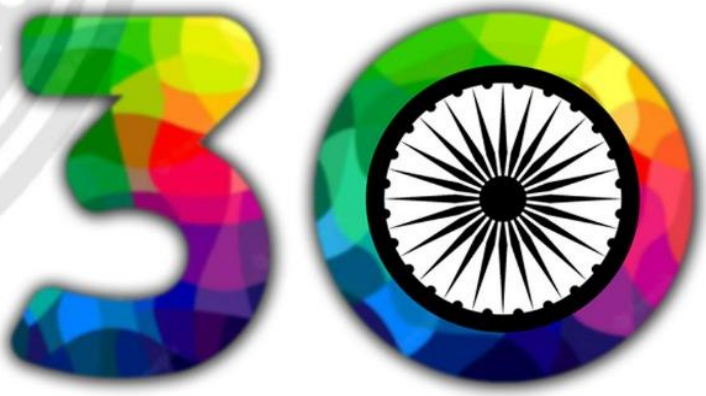
Registration and enquiries

Please whatsapp to Sister Jasline at 8333 4813

Registration has closed due to overwhelming response.

BPC 30th Anniversary Symposium

(Existing BPC students, please register through class monitors)



ANNIVERSARY

sammodanā

Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore rejoices in turning the Dhamma wheel for the past 30 years

DATE : 9 SEPTEMBER 2023

VENUE : THE SINGPOST AUDITORIUM @ SINGPOST CENTRE

TIME : 9am - 5pm

SPEAKERS : Ven. Rathanasara
: Ven. Shi You Wei
: Ven. Tenzin Tsultrim
: Dr. Tony See
: Ms. Sylvia Bay

Scan to REGISTER

Or Click this:
https://forms.gle/Eitzm4mn7VmmmB3M9

Upcoming Activities

- **Buddhist and Pali College 30th Anniversary Symposium**
  - 9 September 2023

- **Buddhist and Pali College Courses**

Course	Course Date
1. Introduction to Buddhism (in English)	12 July to 20 September 2023 (every Wednesday, 10 sessions)
2. Certificate in Buddhist Counselling	11 to 20 August 2023 (total about 30 hours) *(registration closed)*
3. Diploma in Buddhism	**Course Preview Dates**
Poh Ming Tse Temple	16 Sep 2023, 2 – 4pm
Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple)	23 Sep 2023, 2 – 4pm

- **11D9N Footsteps of Buddha India Pilgrimage Trip 15 – 26 Dec 2023**
  (registration closed)

For more information, please contact:

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BPC website	https://bpc.edu.sg
BPC Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin